



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**ALLEGED ORANGE COUNTY DRUG DEALERS ARRESTED**

U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez, Thomas W. Raffanello, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and Orange County Sheriff Kevin Beary today announced the indictment and round-up of 22 individuals in the Orlando area charged with federal cocaine distribution-related violations. Early this morning local and federal law enforcement officers fanned out throughout Orange County rounding up those indicted during this investigation which began in mid-November of 2003. This joint operation included the DEA Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) which is headquartered in Miami and moves throughout the state to assist State and Local agencies with the investigation and prosecution of violent drug trafficking organizations operating in communities. This effort was aimed at diminishing the flow of illegal drugs in the Holden Heights area and the Apopka area of Orange County. During the investigation, numerous undercover purchases were made from alleged drug dealers in these local neighborhoods. Also, \$20,000 in drug proceeds were seized. The individuals arrested today are charged with possession with intent to distribute cocaine. Each is facing a minimum of 5 years'

imprisonment up to 40 years' imprisonment.

“Throughout Florida our DEA-MET effort has put hundreds of violent offenders behind bars. This partnership with the Orange County Sheriff’s Office has paid big dividends and I believe the citizens will see a positive impact in their respective communities,” stated Thomas W. Raffanello, Special Agent in Charge for the DEA Miami Field Division.

U. S. Attorney Paul I. Perez applauded the success of the investigation and stated, “Now begins the prosecution stage which I assure the residents of Orange County will be handled with vigor and determination. If convicted these individuals will be relocated to federal prison for several years.”

"For the past several months the DEA Mobile Enforcement Team worked closely with Orange County drug agents to provide a potent one-two punch right smack in the nose of some of our busier drug dealers," said Sheriff Beary. "We teamed up with some of DEA's best, targeted some of our more notorious drug trafficking areas, and made some significant cases. This is a perfect working example of local law enforcement teaming up with our federal counterparts to enhance the quality of life right here in our community."

These cases will be prosecuted by a team of Assistant United States Attorneys working in the Orlando Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Florida.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.